

Topics

The main part of our review of the year is broken down into five topics, each concentrating on an aspect of what we do.

Topic 1: Portfolio of qualifications and services

This has three parts. The first is about the portfolio of qualifications and things that affect it. The second focuses on particular subject or occupational areas, giving a snapshot of some recent developments in various parts of the portfolio. The third is about our work in Accreditation and regulation.

Topic 2: Policy

This section is about the work we do to develop policy in Scotland, and how we're responding to UK-wide and international policy initiatives.

Topic 3: Partnerships

This describes the work we've been doing with other organisations, and with our customers and stakeholders. You can read about some of our international activities here, and about some of the things we do to support customers.

Topic 4: People

This is about the people who work at SQA, and what they do. Here you'll find out about how our staff promote healthy living, support charity, and what we're doing to protect the environment.

Topic 5: Process

This is all about the way we work — the 'behind the scenes' aspects of what we do, such as how we're harnessing new technology to enhance our services, and how we're responding to UK-wide policy initiatives.

Portfolio of qualifications and services

Review of Core Skills

Background

- ◆ SQA's Qualifications Committee approved the refresh of Core Skills in March 2006.
- ◆ The aims of this limited review are to update standards; remove barriers and widen access; contribute to social inclusion; and better meet the needs of employers.
- ◆ The proposals take account of Curriculum for Excellence, Determined to Succeed, Skills for Scotland: A Lifelong Skills Strategy, and employer identification of skills gaps through Futureskills/CBI surveys.
- ◆ Some of the work (including creating new components in Working with Others and Information & Communication Technology) was completed before April 2007.

What we did in 2007-08

Used a new specification for our Core Skills Units. The Units are written for the learner in plain English to promote ownership of the learning. The assessment processes are also extremely flexible. We developed new Units for all Core Skills, including NQ and workplace Units, and small Units at SCQF levels 2 and 3 in Communication and Numeracy.

Introduced smaller 10 hour Units We developed these at SCQF levels 2 and 3 in Communication and Numeracy.

Held national engagement events on the draft Units. We maintained a dialogue with centres through our SQA Academy webspace, and discussed our proposals with stakeholder groups.

Validated and launched the new NQ Units nationally in March 2008. There has been unanimous support for the new Unit Specification as much more user-friendly and accessible.

What happens next?

- ◆ The new Units will be available from August 2008, with first certification from October 2008.
- ◆ We plan to monitor uptake, provide support materials for each Unit, provide guidance on changes to the Core Skill profile as a result of new components, and offer practitioner events in the autumn to support the new standards.

- ◆ We will produce support for assessing against the new standards through the Understanding Standards website (USW).

Portfolio of qualifications and services

Successful delivery of 2007 Diet

Background

- ◆ Delivering the external assessments for National Qualifications in schools and colleges all over Scotland is one of our main priorities every year.
- ◆ The preparation and planning cycle that underpins this delivery involves significant activity throughout the year, for example recruiting markers, invigilators and other appointees, quality assurance of coursework.
- ◆ This is in addition to the annual peak of assessment and certification activity between May and August.
- ◆ We monitor our progress throughout the year and deliver the main run of certification in August to meet the performance measures agreed with the Scottish Government.

What we did in 2007–08

Met all the agreed performance targets for August certification. We issued certificates to 155,893 candidates. In addition, around 20,000 candidates accessed their results online, and nearly 6,000 of these also opted to receive a mobile phone text alert.

Dealt with an increasing number of appeals. There were 60,000 appeals in 2007. This was a 32.5% rise from the number of appeals the year before — 5.2% of total entries for National Courses and Standard Grade. This is due in part to an increase in entries for Higher and Intermediate 2 and in part to the removal of the Derived Grades procedure. However, there is concern that the appeals system is not being used as was originally intended, and that less than half of all submitted appeals are successful. We will continue to work with centres to improve the success rate and increase understanding and adherence to the procedures.

Portfolio of qualifications and services

HN Modernisation Programme and PDA developments

Background

- ◆ The Higher National Modernisation Programme began in August 2003 and is scheduled to be completed in December 2008. It aims to produce a coherent, high-quality catalogue of Higher National Certificates (HNCs), Diplomas (HNDs) and Higher National Units which prepare candidates for employment and for progression to further study.
- ◆ Professional Development Awards (PDAs) are vocationally specific qualifications that allow students to build on existing qualifications or experience, and facilitate career development. They aim to address current and projected skills shortages at intermediate professional and technical levels with high quality education and training, and are aligned to National Occupational Standards.

What we did in 2007–08

Validated 23 specialist collaborative and 21 specialist single centre Higher National Qualifications. The number of HN Group Awards in the catalogue has now been rationalised to just over 250, making the landscape much clearer for learners and employers.

Provided support and worked in partnership. All colleges have participated in the development process, and we have worked very closely with SFEU and COLEG to produce staff development workshops and teaching and learning materials. We have also produced 986 assessment exemplars to support modernised qualifications through ESF and Scottish Funding Council funding.

Validated 36 consortium, one specialist collaborative, and five specialist single centre PDAs. Like all our vocational qualifications, PDAs are developed and delivered in partnership between SQA, colleges, employers and professional bodies, and there is strong employer involvement.

Made available more e-assessment material to support our HNC/Ds and worked closely with colleges to support them in using this material.

Portfolio of qualifications and services

National Qualifications Group Awards Development

Background

- ◆ National Certificates and NPAs (both at SCQF levels 2–6) provide progression routes into employment and higher education. NPAs are also used to upskill and reskill people in employment. We see this as vital to Scotland's ability to compete economically.
- ◆ We consulted partners on design principles for National Certificates and National Progression Awards in 2005–06. We also established the management arrangements for the development programme.
- ◆ We completed preliminary research for 12 high-priority occupational sectors, and carried out research for areas that are used in a number of sectors such as Communication and Project Planning.
- ◆ The NQ GA Development Programme began in August 2005.

What we did in 2007–08

Validated four National Certificates and 29 National Progression Awards. Five National Certificates and 78 National Progression Awards are now available to centres.

Held the second annual National Qualifications Group Award Development Conference.

Prepared a business case for continuing the development programme. The additional investment will support the release of subject experts to come together and speedily write and develop the new qualifications. We are using SQA resource, seeking Government support and matched funding from Europe.

What happens next?

- ◆ A further 13 National Certificates and 15 National Progression Awards will be available to centres by end August 2008.
- ◆ We will be developing e-assessment material to support National Qualification Group Awards, and working closely with colleges to support them in using this material.

Portfolio of qualifications and services

Skills for Work

Background

- ◆ Our Skills for Work Courses provide young people with a hands-on, experience-based learning programme to help them develop practical skills that relate directly to the world of work. They are principally aimed at young people in S3 and S4, but are also open to others.
- ◆ Young people taking one of these new Skills for Work Courses will normally spend some of their time at a local college, or other training provider. This will mean learning in a different environment, meeting new people, including employers, and facing new challenges.
- ◆ Following a successful pilot in two phases between 2005 and 2007, 13 Skills for Work Courses became available for mainstream delivery in August 2007.
- ◆ Access 3, Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2, and Higher Courses are available.

What we did in 2007–08

Certificated 1,236 candidates in August 2007. 5,000 candidates took part in the pilot — many of these are working towards certification in 2008.

Hosted a series of Support Networks in the autumn. These events provide support for centres delivering, or thinking about delivering, Skills for Work Courses. A total of 18 Skills for Work Support Network events have been held, covering all available Courses.

Developed e-assessment tools to support Skills for Work Courses. These include an innovative e-portfolio system called *Deskpace*, which is used to collate work for assessment, to enhance personal development planning, to record progress on Courses and to support group work.

Evaluated the Skills for Work pilot. Independent reports by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) and Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education (HMIe) (see links at www.sqa.org.uk/skillsforwork) are very positive, and confirm the success of these new National Courses in meeting the needs of young people of all abilities.

Portfolio of qualifications and services

Qualifications highlight: Adult Literacy and Numeracy PDAs

Background

- ◆ Feedback suggested the time was right to review the PDA Introduction to Tutoring in Adult Literacies Learning (ITALL). The majority of the development process was completed before April 2007.
- ◆ In partnership with Learning Connections, we responded further to the Adult Literacy & Numeracy in Scotland (2001) report in planning development of a new PDA in Delivering Literacies Learning Programmes for the Workplace.

What we did in 2007-08

Held a national launch event for the revised PDA ITALL in May. We provided extensive assessment support packs for centres, and guidance on transition arrangements. We also secured ESF funding to develop a resource on the Understanding Standards website (USW) to support the new award. The revised PDA has been welcomed by practitioners. The USW resource was hugely appreciated.

Supported development of the PDA: Developing Literacies Learning Programmes for the Workplace. The Units were developed by a consortium of partners and we validated them in January. We launched the PDA in March, supported by partners from Scottish Government and the development consortium.

Portfolio of qualifications and services

Qualifications highlight: National Certificates in Care

Background

- ◆ There were many requests from the sector for National Certificates in Health and Social Care. The work began in 2006.
- ◆ The National Certificate in Health and Social Care (SCQF level 6) was available for the first time in August 2007.
- ◆ Part of this development was the revision of the Higher and Intermediate 1 and 2 National Courses in Care.

What we did in 2007-08

Launched the National Certificate in Health and Social Care at an event in April. 25 FE colleges were represented. We kept in contact with admissions officers at institutions offering Nursing degrees to ensure that the programmes were appropriate as entry qualifications. Feedback has been informal but excellent, with clear indication that we have provided what the sector required.

Developed a National Certificate in Child Health and Social Care (SCQF level 5). Again, this was in response to demand from the sector and, again, feedback has been good. This National Certificate will be available from August.

Held a Best Practice seminar on the revised Higher and Intermediate 2 National Courses. Lecturers gave presentations on their experience and how they may change their approach in the second year of delivery. Around 45 delegates from FE colleges and schools attended, and feedback forms showed a high level of satisfaction.

Portfolio of qualifications and services

Qualifications highlight: New National Qualifications in Cantonese and Mandarin

Background

- ◆ The Scottish Government's *Stronger Engagement with China* policy charges us with delivering National Qualifications in Chinese by 2010.

What we did in 2007-08

Delivered our commitment ahead of requirement. Access 3, and Intermediate 1 and 2 National Courses will be available from August in Mandarin (simplified), Mandarin (traditional) and Cantonese — the first external examinations will take place in 2009.

What happens next?

- ◆ We are also developing Higher and Advanced Higher National Courses for delivery in 2009.

Portfolio of qualifications and services

Qualifications highlight: Computing

Background

- ◆ Computing/IT is a key sector for SQA. The Computing team has been expanded to address market demands for qualifications in this area. Awards grew by 32% between 2006 and 2007, largely as a result of the success of PC Passport, which was originally introduced in 2004.

What we did in 2007-08

Held the 'Showcase Event' in Hampden Park Stadium in June. 150 people attended to hear about new developments including new National Certificates (at SCQF levels 4/5/6), seven new National Progression Awards, and the refreshed PC Passport suite.

Head of Computing event was held at SFEU to assist Heads of Department with their forward planning. This event focused on HN and PDA developments including the new HNC Interactive Media (validated in June 2007).

Developed support material including a range of online learning material to support HNC/D Computing and HNC/D Information Technology.

Continued our strategic partnership with IT vendors (DIVA). New partnerships were arranged with Adobe and ComputerPrep, involving the creation of new qualifications to match these vendor awards.

What happens next?

- ◆ Continued growth is forecast for this sector, with increased uptake anticipated for the new National Certificate, National Progression Awards and PC Passport awards.
- ◆ There are many potential new areas of activity, including digital media, multimedia and computer games. We are planning an HND Interactive Media, and discussing an HND Computer Games Development.

Portfolio of qualifications and services

Qualifications highlight: Internet Safety (e-qualifications)

Background

- ◆ We need to keep our portfolio up to date with changes in education, training and society.
- ◆ We need to respond to public and political concerns about young people's use of the internet, and to older users' concerns about privacy and safety.

What we did in 2007-08

In partnership with BT, Microsoft and Strathclyde Police, developed a single National Unit in Internet Safety at SCQF level 4. It can be delivered in many ways: teacher-led, student-centred, distance learning, and via mobile phone — our first ever 'mobile qualification'.

Held launch event in Glasgow with input from Strathclyde Police, Learning Teaching Scotland, and Langholm Academy. The Unit is designed for school pupils, college students, parents, adults who work with children, people who shop online, and 'silver surfers'. All schools and colleges are approved to offer this qualification. There are currently 600 candidates (this is the first year of offering) and we hope that this qualification becomes standard in all centres.

Portfolio of qualifications and services

Qualifications highlight: Construction

Background

- ◆ The National Occupational Standards for Construction Craft have been revised. There is now a requirement to certificate the Training & Assessment Programmes for the Modern Apprenticeship in Craft.
- ◆ One of our objectives was to become involved with Test & Trial for the emerging Qualifications and Credit Framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland. We secured accreditation for our certificate in Highways Maintenance.
- ◆ The previous range of National Certificates in 'Built Environment' (which includes Quantity Surveying, Building Surveying, Architectural Technology, Construction Management, Facilities Management and Civil Engineering) was being revised to produce one National Certificate for Built Environment and one for Civil Engineering.

What we did in 2007-08

Carried out a scoping exercise to identify how the Training and Assessment Programmes in Craft should be certificated. It looked for revisions required to the Training and Assessment Programmes, and to the Workplace Recording Sheets for the SVQ level 3. We also completed a scoping exercise to review the current PDA Advanced Certificates and HNCs in Construction Craft. The revised qualifications should be available in August 2010.

Developed and launched a National Progression Award (NPA) in Conservation of Masonry. Funded by Historic Scotland and the National Lottery, this was a high profile project for Scottish Government and Learn Direct & Build, who developed the e-delivery and assessment material. We have also started work on development of a PDA in Conservation of Masonry.

Developed a Highways Maintenance qualification and support materials for the UK market. We then had this qualification accredited by QCA as a Certificate at Level 2 in Highways Maintenance.

Validated the new National Certificates in Built Environment and Civil Engineering in March. These offer progression to the suite of 14 HNC/Ds. They are also underpinning qualifications to a small number of level 3 SVQs in the Technician area. The National Certificate and SVQ together make up the Modern Apprenticeship for the subject.

Portfolio of qualifications and services

Qualifications highlight: English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

Background

- ◆ The Government's Adult ESOL Strategy for Scotland was launched in March.

What we did in 2007–08

Expanded our ESOL provision to complete the framework. The Access 2 Literacies Units are now available. They support learners who have no literacy, or minimal literacy, in English.

Supported and promoted the new NQ framework through: a series of presentations to specialists and centres; an e-learning CD; publishing *Guidelines on Assessment of Speaking and Writing*; running training events on Assessment of Speaking and Writing. We attended conferences; and took exhibition stands at events including the New Scots Conference in June, and Business Scotland Conference in October.

Developed progression opportunities for ESOL candidates. Higher ESOL is now accepted by every university in Scotland, and Oxford University, as general entry qualification. We began discussions with General Teaching Council for Scotland on recognition for entry to teacher training.

Increased the take-up of our ESOL qualifications. We brought new centres on board. We also developed and launched ESOL for Work for the wider UK market.

Introduced the new Professional Development Award (PDA) Introduction to Tutoring ESOL (SCQF level 6). This is a first-stage qualification, and provides core skills and knowledge for those who have no formal training in tutoring ESOL.

What happens next?

- ◆ We intend to further improve the quality of assessment support and exemplifications to centres
- ◆ We intend to further develop our 'ESOL for Work' provision
- ◆ We intend to create tailored learning materials for the new PDA Introduction to Tutoring ESOL.

- ◆ We plan to have the new PDA validated and launched before the summer.

Portfolio of qualifications and services

Qualifications highlight: Personal Development

Background

- ◆ The Review of National Qualifications (March 2004) recommended that the existing National Course should be withdrawn and that all Units in Personal and Social Development should be reviewed.

What we did in 2007–08

Created a new suite of Units which link together as new non-graded Courses. The Courses will be available from August, at Access 3 to Higher levels. We have written National Assessment Bank materials for all the Units. The existing Course will be withdrawn in July, and the Units that are part of it will cease to be available.

The new Units and Courses provide centres with far greater flexibility allowing their use in a range of contexts. This gives centres the opportunity to tailor delivery to meet the local needs and interest and provides scope to recognise many of the wider achievements candidates display in activities beyond the traditional subject-based curriculum.

In some Units there is also scope to gather evidence of achievement from activities which naturally arise in other curricular areas. Assessment is now embedded in learning and teaching. These Units and Courses are internally assessed throughout. This allows the teachers and lecturers who are delivering the Units and Courses to be much more engaged in the assessment process.

Held launch events for the new Courses in November. These were attended by delegates from over 150 centres.

Portfolio of qualifications and services

Qualifications highlight: the Sciences and Engineering

Background

- ◆ We needed to respond to the Government's *Science Strategy for Scotland*.
- ◆ We had identified a need to raise awareness of our existing range of qualifications for Science.
- ◆ Our initial work in this area focused on Science, but it has now been expanded to include Engineering.

What we did in 2007–08

Reviewed current qualifications in Science and Engineering. We investigated stakeholders' needs and plans, including sector skills councils, employers, and education and training providers.

Prepared a draft report recommending future qualifications developments. We continued to inform policy and raise awareness of existing provision through participation in Scottish Chemical Industry Strategy Group, Scottish Engineering Network, Scottish Association of Further Education Engineering Colleges, and the Engineering for the Future Steering Group.

Mapped current qualifications in the Sciences to the new curricular outcomes of Curriculum for Excellence.

Portfolio of qualifications and services

Qualifications highlight: Qualifications for the Security Industry

Background

- ◆ The Private Security Industry Act (2001) came into effect in Scotland on 1 November. It requires people working in private security firms to be qualified and licensed.
- ◆ We developed three National Progression Awards at SCQF level 5, covering: CCTV (Public Space Surveillance); Door Supervision; and Security Guarding. These were validated and accredited and endorsed by the Security Industry Authority (SIA).
- ◆ We developed a customised online assessment system, which also allows candidate information to be securely transferred directly to the SIA.

What we did in 2007–08

Held an information event for centres to promote the NPAs and demonstrate the online system in October 2007.

Finalised and launched the online assessment system in September 2007.

Approved centres and set up systems. There are currently five approved centres. We have also offered support for existing and potential centres (including visits by Business Development Managers and Customer Support Managers).

Portfolio of qualifications and services

SQA Accreditation

Background

- ◆ We have a responsibility through our Accreditation function to set and maintain standards for awarding bodies and accredited qualifications, such as SVQs.
- ◆ The skills policy landscape at Scottish and UK level is changing, with the publication of the *Skills for Scotland: A Lifelong Skills Strategy* and the creation of the UK Commission for Employment and Skills.
- ◆ In 2006–07, we completed a review of our Accreditation function. The review confirmed that the majority of awarding bodies, sector skills councils and other standards setting bodies are satisfied with the level of service provided by the Accreditation function.
- ◆ The review recommended that we should, with ministerial support, extend the remit of Accreditation to cover a wider range of qualifications.

What we did in 2007–08

- ◆ *Successfully concluded the three-year project to test how SCQF credit and level should be allocated to SVQs.* SCQF credit and level has now been allocated to 2,000 units from 115 SVQs. The project helped confirm the process to do this.
- ◆ *Started the creation of separate regulation and accreditation teams.* This was one of the review's recommendations. Existing job descriptions have been revised. Plans are now well under way to create the separate teams.
- ◆ *Continued discussions with Scottish Government* about extending the Accreditation remit to cover a broader range of qualifications.
- ◆ *Agreed joint principles for regulation* with our fellow qualifications regulators in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Policy

Analysis to influence policy

Background

- ◆ We are committed to the use of robust evidence in the development and evaluation of policy and its implementation. We carry out or commission research on a range of topics to support this, and publish Research Bulletins to disseminate the results.
- ◆ We respond to a variety of consultations from stakeholders and partners. Our contribution is an important part of ensuring policy development in Scotland takes account of the needs of learners.
- ◆ In 2007–08, we provided both pre- and post-appeal data on pupil attainment to the Scottish Government. We also provided data and analysis to stakeholders. This included regular reports and over 500 *ad hoc* requests.

What we did in 2007–08

Published six Research Bulletins on our website: Mobile Phone Quiz Evaluation; Projecting the Demand for Qualifications in the Scottish Economy to 2011; Projecting the Demand for Qualifications: A Review; Skills for Work and the Development of Vocational and Pre-Vocational Courses for School-Age Pupils; Evaluation of the Digital Media and ICT Vendor Alliance (DIVA); The use of Extra Time as an Assessment Arrangement for Disabled Candidates and/or those with Additional Support Needs.

Commissioned some research on the nature of English as a subject, with international comparisons, to provide the basis for a future review of Higher English.

Contributed and responded to the following consultations: Schools for the 21st century (European Commission); Aberdeen College Strategic Plan 2008–10; Skills for Scotland: A Lifelong Skills Strategy (Scottish Government); Code of Professionalism and Conduct (General Teaching Council of Scotland); Merger of Glasgow College of Nautical Studies and Glasgow Metropolitan College; Articulation for All? (Scottish Funding Council); QCF Regulatory Arrangements (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority).

Provided information on many topics, including: 2006 Annual Statistical Report and Digest; 2007 Pre-Appeal and Post-Appeal Analysis; 2007 Average Component Marks; 2007 Grade Boundaries; 2007 Pupil Attainment Data; Entries and Awards for Administration Qualifications; Entries and Awards for Childcare Qualifications; Entries

and Awards for Customer Service Qualifications; Entries and Awards for Plumbing Qualifications.

Policy

International Consultancy and Study Visits

Background

- ◆ We offer technical consultancy services to overseas organisations, and a Study and Learning Visit service.
- ◆ Our International Strategy is designed to support the Scottish Government's commitment to promote a range of Scottish education activity overseas and promote a positive image of Scotland as a place to live, work and study.

What we did in 2007-08

Had a three-year extension to our contract in Botswana approved. This is the third phase of our project to support and accredit Botswana Technical Education Programmes.

As lead partner in an international consortium, secured a two-year World Bank funded contract to provide technical assistance to the Mozambique government to help develop a TVET qualifications system. This work began in December 2007 and is scheduled for completion in November 2009

Benchmarked South African qualifications developed for the new National Senior Certificate against the equivalent Scottish qualifications.

Provided consultancy services in Northern Cyprus to assist with capacity building for the development of a qualification system. We were sub-contracted by the British Council.

Provided technical assistance in three projects in Lithuania. The projects were supported by EU Mobility (Leonardo) funding, and covered: the development of a National Qualifications Framework; the development of a qualifications register; and a Quality Assurance Strategy for the Lithuanian Labour Market Training Authority.

Policy

Curriculum for Excellence

Background

- ◆ *Curriculum for Excellence* (CfE) was launched in 2004 and is designed to provide a seamless education from age 3 to 18 in Scotland. We are one of the four partner national organisations — SQA, the Scottish Government, Learning and Teaching Scotland, and HMle — involved in the programme. Our principal role is to contribute to work on qualifications and assessment, a key strand of the programme.
- ◆ So far, we have completed an extensive programme of research, literature review and engagement with stakeholders. This has led to plans for a review of qualifications at SCQF levels 4 and 5.

What we did in 2007–08

Input into the Scottish Government's review of qualifications at SCQF levels 4 and 5, and the development of Baccalaureate models in Science and Languages at SCQF levels 6 and 7.

Carried out more research. In September, with the Scottish Government, we approved five action research projects on how current and future qualifications could support CfE. These teacher- and lecturer-led projects explored ways of developing CfE's four 'capacities', and included approaches to the delivery of Core Skills, National Courses at Intermediate 2, and interdisciplinary programmes. We have been supporting these centres with their projects.

What happens next?

- ◆ The Government has announced the launch of a formal consultation exercise on future arrangements for National Qualifications in June 2008. As well as covering National Qualifications at SCQF levels 4 and 5, the proposals include the introduction of new awards in literacy and numeracy at SCQF levels 3-5. The consultation will also explore ways of increasing flexibility within the qualifications framework.
- ◆ It has also announced the introduction of a Scottish Science Baccalaureate and a Scottish Languages Baccalaureate. These will consist of a package of Highers and Advanced Highers and an interdisciplinary project. We will work with the Scottish Government to develop and introduce these new awards.

Policy

More Choices, More Chances

Background

- ◆ More Choices, More Chances is the Scottish Government's action plan to reduce the proportion of young people in Scotland who are not in education, employment or training.
- ◆ As the national awarding body, we have an important role to play to ensure that qualifications and assessment can recognise a wide range of skills, knowledge, abilities and experiences. We must do everything we can to ensure that our qualifications help increase choice and opportunity and support progress to education, employment and training.

What we did in 2007-08

Established a dedicated project manager post to co-ordinate our activities.

Carried out an initial engagement exercise with a number of stakeholders, key partners and external agencies. This included a range of organisations within the voluntary sector currently supporting vulnerable young people. We established links with key stakeholders within the seven high priority areas for More Choices, More Chances.

Commissioned research and developed a strategy to determine how we can best contribute to the Scottish Government's More Choices, More Chances priorities. We identified our key priority to explore how our current qualifications can best be used to support vulnerable disengaged learners.

Had a positive response from those supporting vulnerable and disengaged young people. This work has been an opportunity to develop partnerships that will increase choices and chances and ensure that our qualifications provide engaging and flexible choice and opportunity.

Policy

The Scottish Standard

Background

- ◆ One of our corporate goals is to streamline the way we set, maintain and monitor standards for qualifications and assessment. We also need to communicate this effectively. This will help ensure that we continue to meet our self-regulatory requirements.
- ◆ We had already written our initial draft strategy for taking the work forward, and devised an outline of the Scottish Standard stages.

What we did in 2007-08

Gone some way towards establishing the Scottish Standard's identity and laying the foundations for future development work. In the course of the year we produced a leaflet for centres, a Scottish Development Programme (2007-09), and a dedicated section of the website (www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/26783.html).

Partnerships

Continuing Professional Development for practitioners

Background

- ◆ A vital part of developing and maintaining a robust qualifications system is promoting understanding of the standards that the qualifications are based on.

What we did in 2007-08

Completed a series of Professional Development Workshops. These focused on National Qualifications and informed delegates about: issues affecting candidates in the 2007 examination; action points that might improve candidates' performance; and best practice. There were also practical workshops in many subjects using selected candidate material from 2007 examinations.

Held events for schools and colleges supporting understanding of Estimates and Appeals. These explained the way the process works generally, and were for schools and colleges, and independent schools (in partnership with the Scottish Council of Independent Schools). We held further events focusing on Higher English.

Continued to expand our support for professionals involved in assessment through our SQA Academy website. The website includes a number of distinct 'webspaces'. Some are only available to registered users and others are open to all. Topics covered include: A *Core Skills for the Future* section; introductory, open-to-all courses on various topics, including *Overview of National Qualifications*; scheduled courses designed to be delivered by tutors; online staff development materials developed in partnership with the SFEU; and courses available only to our appointees, including Scottish Survey of Achievement Field Officer training and Marking to National Standards.

Partnerships

2007 Art Exhibition and Tour

Background

- ◆ The exhibition ran in the National Gallery of Scotland's IT Gallery from October to January.
- ◆ 130 of the best works of art were selected from over 34,000 pieces submitted for the 2007 Standard Grade, Intermediate and Higher examinations. There were paintings, sculpture, design, ceramics, fashion and jewellery.

What we did in 2007–08

Organised and launched the exhibition. It was opened by Janet Brown, our Chief Executive, and John Leighton, Director General of the National Galleries, with invited guests — students, their families and teachers, sponsors and representatives from education and the arts.

Published a fully illustrated catalogue. We also published a student catalogue, and both were free of charge. We also produced a set of eight postcards featuring works from the exhibition.

Introduced a travel grant scheme, with the support of sponsors, to help schools and colleges bring students to the exhibition. This offer was taken up by over 200 schools. These schools were offered a guided tour of one of the National Galleries.

Published the artworks in our online gallery. The exhibition page of our website — www.sqa.org.uk/art2007 — has had over 10,000 hits since it went live in October 2007.

Partnerships

Connecting with SQA customer conference 2007

Background

- ◆ Building on the success of our first event in 2005, the *Connecting with SQA* 2007 event was planned to be an engaging and dynamic conference for schools, colleges, employers and training providers.

What we did in 2007-08

Sent invitations to all SQA approved centres and key stakeholders. As this was an ideal opportunity to share work and news with employers and other organisations, the final guest list was even wider than this.

Ran the *Connecting with SQA* Customer Conference on 14 and 15 June. This was the most prestigious of planned events during 2007, and we chose it to launch our corporate re-branding.

Organised 36 sessions, that delegates could book onto. There were also 17 exhibition stands. The programme was designed to support all sectors and was based on feedback from our field staff.

Partnerships

Customer Satisfaction Survey 2007

Background

- ◆ Three previous surveys were done by external consultants and were a comprehensive measurement of all SQA's activities.
- ◆ Part of the action plan resulting from the 2006 survey was that we should carry out two mini surveys.

What we did in 2007-08

Invited all our centres to respond to the survey. The survey was carried out in-house.

Measured the areas customers were least satisfied with in the 2006 Customer Survey. These areas were: the Website, Communication, and Finance. We also surveyed on Management of Candidate Data. A total of 220 customers responded and, encouragingly, our overall satisfaction rating rose to 82%. The results show that satisfaction has improved in all areas that customers were least satisfied with in the 2006 survey.

Found that customers are most satisfied with Management of Candidate Data (an overall satisfaction rating of 92%) and the Customer Contact Centre (an overall satisfaction rating of 93%). Customers are least satisfied with our website, with an overall satisfaction rating of 71.5%.

Partnerships

Working with employers and training providers

Background

- ◆ Throughout the year, we have been working to present a more cohesive approach to working with employers and training providers.
- ◆ This has allowed us to work more efficiently and effectively with our customers and stakeholders in this market segment and given us the opportunity to maximise promotion of SQA products and services.

What we did in 2007–08

Published a bumper Summer Special issue of our e-zine. This went to 1,677 employers and training providers, and resulted in 1,387 clicks on the website.

Launched the SMILE campaign promoting products and services to Employers and Training Providers at high profile business events and conferences, including Business Scotland and SLTN exhibition.

Ran a regional programme of Data Services Surgeries to support employers and training providers.

Strengthened several partnerships: with the Scottish Training Federation — SQA was the main sponsor of STF conference, and Janet Brown was event keynote speaker; with five Chambers of Commerce, where we regularly provide materials promoting SQA products and services; and with STUC to support members with SQA qualifications in ESOL.

Partnerships

Scottish Survey of Achievement and 5–14 Assessment

Background

- ◆ One of our objectives is informing and supporting national policy. This includes the Scottish Survey of Achievement (SSA) and the 5–14 National Assessment Bank.
- ◆ The SSA is an annual sample based national survey that monitors how well pupils in Scotland are learning. It monitors attainment in Primary 3, Primary 5, Primary 7 and Secondary 2. It includes written assessments, practical tasks and questionnaires and covers key curricular areas and core skills.
- ◆ The 5–14 National Assessment Bank is a web-based resource from which teachers can download National Assessments in Reading, Writing and Mathematics (in both English and Gaelic) to support and confirm their judgements about pupils' progress.

What we did in 2007–08

Played a key role in the Scottish Survey of Achievement 2007 Our 5–14 team was responsible for distributing 100,000 written assessment booklets to school; organising and quality assuring the marking; training and debriefing Field Officers; and conducting the moderation of writing with some 69 teachers from throughout Scotland. It also contributed to the technical report of the survey, and managed the SSA helpline to provide advice and support to survey schools.

Played a key role in the Scottish Survey of Achievement 2008. The team was responsible for: task development for the written booklets and practical tasks; training around 170 Field Officers; managing the SSA helpline; organising the printing of assessment tasks for the practical element of the survey and approximately 100,000 written assessment booklets; and producing, printing and distributing guidance to schools on the conduct of the survey.

Supplemented Field Officers' and Moderators' training by using SQA Academy, our virtual learning environment. This enabled them to have: contact with staff in SQA to answer questions; forums to share experiences; access to materials to help them understand the standard they were assessing; and the forms they needed to complete. Almost all the field officers and moderators reported that the experience had helped improve their assessment practice.

Extended the content of the 5-14 National Assessment Bank, uploading new tasks as and when made available.

What happens next?

- ◆ We will continue to support national policy by developing assessment tasks for monitoring pupils progress in line with a Curriculum for Excellence and in accord with the principles of Assessment is for Learning
- ◆ We will continue to extend the use of SQA Academy to enhance training of field officers, moderators and other appointees.
- ◆ We will develop similar approaches to supporting other SQA field staff, eg External Verifiers.

Partnerships

International awarding

Background

- ◆ Our International Strategy aims to grow our international awarding activity in specified target markets, in accordance with Government strategy. This will also help us seek alternative sources of income.
- ◆ Our centres in China currently offer SQA Higher National Diploma programmes.
- ◆ There is other overseas awarding activity, mainly in the Middle East.

What we did in 2007–08

Saw significant growth in the number of candidates entered for our Higher National Diploma Group Awards.

Visited China to strengthen links. SQA staff carried out training events for centre staff and quality assurance visits, and took part in the 13th International Education Exhibition in Beijing.

To help build capacity in the Chinese education system, we delivered the first of a series of training events for External Verifiers in China. We also had a successful HND Annual Conference in Shanghai in March.

What happens next?

- ◆ We will sign a new Memorandum of Understanding with our Chinese partners in April 2008.

Partnerships

Scottish Learning Festival

Background

- ◆ The Scottish Learning Festival is the most prestigious educational event in Scotland, and is attended by almost 7,000 delegates. This conference and exhibition is organised by Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS) and took place in September 2007.
- ◆ We took part to strengthen partnerships with stakeholders in education and training sectors, and to increase awareness and understanding of our qualifications.

What we did in 2007-08

Exhibited at the Festival as part of the high-profile Scottish Education Village in partnership with LTS, Scottish Government and HMIE. SQA staff also presented several seminar sessions. These were:

- ◆ 21st Century Skills: Internet Qualifications
- ◆ Online Teacher Support for Assessment of Learning: The Understanding Standards Website and the SQA Academy
- ◆ A Model for Developing E-assessment: The SOLAR Project
- ◆ The Sports Store Game: Delivering Curriculum through Games
- ◆ Current SQA portfolio and Curriculum for Excellence
- ◆ Using SQA Academy to Support Teachers
- ◆ Using E-assessment to Support Teachers and Learners

We have committed to participating in the 2008 Festival.

Partnerships

SQA in the UK and Ireland market

Background

- ◆ We want to increase the use of our qualifications nationally and internationally.
- ◆ We were approved as an awarding body to operate in England, Wales and Northern Ireland by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (the regulatory body for England, Wales and Northern Ireland) in February 2007.

What we did in 2007-08

Participated in the test and trial of the Qualifications and Credit Framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland. We had the Certificate in Highways Maintenance accredited to the QCF as part of this process.

Had a number of qualifications accredited by QCA for the UK market in a range of sectors.

Applied to the National Qualifications Authority in Ireland (NQAI) for alignment of our qualifications to the NQAI's National Framework of Qualifications. This application was approved in February.

What happens next?

- ◆ We intend to expand the number of awards available in the wider UK and to continue to promote the existing awards.
- ◆ When the QCF is rolled out in August 2008, we will look at amending the qualifications we have in the National Qualifications Framework for accreditation to the Qualifications and Credit Framework and we will accredit new qualifications straight to the QCF.
- ◆ NQAI and SQA will explore the promotion of alignment of SQA qualifications to the National Framework for Qualifications for Ireland.

Partnerships

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

Background

- ◆ We have an on-going commitment to the SCQF's strategic goals to maintain the quality and integrity of the Framework; promote and develop the Framework as a tool to support lifelong learning; and to develop and maintain relationships with other Frameworks in the UK, Europe and internationally.

What we did in 2007-08

Completed the second phase of work with UK qualification regulators (QCA, CCEA, DELLS) to explore alignment and articulation of SCQF and SQA qualifications with the QCF (Qualifications and Credit Framework). This involved: exploring the alignment of framework levels and developing articulation agreements; exploring the credit values of equivalent qualifications in the QCF and SCQF; and exploring the IT systems necessary to support credit transfer.

In partnership with Napier University, presented a credit rating workshop to the organisations in the SCQF partnership's pilot project to extend the facility to credit rate. These organisations are City and Guilds, Institute of Leadership and Management, Chartered Institute of Bankers, and the Scottish Police College.

Were the UK representatives on the European Commission's technical working group on credit transfer in vocational education and training (ECVET).

Partnerships

Star Awards 2007

Background

- ◆ Our Annual 'Star' Awards were re-vamped. They celebrate achievement and recognise the best in Scottish education and training.
- ◆ The *Star Awards* allow us to recognise candidates who have faced up to particular challenges, or put their qualifications to good use; salute centres that have supported their candidates particularly well; and reward excellence in individuals and establishments.

What we did in 2007–08

Organised and marketed the event. Centres were encouraged to nominate for the award categories. The nominations were judged and announced. The event was planned and implemented — from guests, entertainment, catering, dressing of the room and stage setting, presentations and speeches. Sponsors were brought on board, photography and press coverage arranged.

Received great press coverage — particularly from local press — and excellent feedback from finalists and their organisations.

People

Staff Charity – raising funds for Alzheimer Scotland and Marie Curie Cancer

Background

- ◆ Every year, SQA staff nominate and vote on a charity. A group of volunteers in Glasgow and Dalkeith form the 'Informal Committee', which raises funds for these charities. Many other members of staff help out at various fundraising events.

What we did in 2007-08

Held events: our Glasgow site's most popular events are the Christmas and Summer Fayres. Our Quiz Nights have become a legend in their own right.

Staff in our Dalkeith office held a Christmas Fayre with appearances from Mr and Mrs Clause, carol singers and a variety of internal and external stallholders. Other ways of raising funds included a sponsored leg wax, our Halloween Fayre, a sponsored silence, daffodil planting, bakes sales, raffles and quizzes.

Cheques for £11,000 will be presented to our nominated charities for 2007-08 in May.

People

Equality and diversity

Background

- ◆ As a public body we are required by legislation to fulfil both general and specific public duties.
- ◆ We have three Equalities Schemes, covering Race, Gender, and Disability.
- ◆ We have to comply with the Scottish public sector's Equal Opportunities Best Value requirements.
- ◆ We are publicly committed to improving the delivery of our services to all by removing barriers and promoting equality.

What we did in 2007-08

Appointed an Equalities Officer in April 2007. The Equalities Officer's role is to co-ordinate all our equalities activities — they have an impact in all the different areas of our business.

Published our Gender Equality Scheme, and refreshed our Race Equality Scheme in June. We have a legal duty to publish the Gender Equality Scheme. We refreshed the Race Equality Scheme so that our Equalities statements are unified and consistent.

Started our programme of Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs). These are a vital first step in applying equalities policies to our operations. Because this will affect our customers as much as ourselves, we encourage our customers and stakeholders to take part.

Raised awareness and encouraged participation and co-operation. We launched the Equalities area of our website. We published a progress review in December covering all three Equality Schemes.

People

Environment

Background

- ◆ We are committed to sustainable development and protecting the environment in our work. We reviewed our Environmental Management system during 2006–07, and established an Environment Forum to keep staff informed of developments. We have developed environmental management targets and we continue to encourage our teams to include these in their operational plans.
- ◆ The awareness and concerns of our staff are an important motivation in our activities. We are becoming increasingly aware that we consume a fair number of trees to make the paper we use, and the feeling has grown that tree planting would be a great way to put something back into the woodland.

What we did in 2007–08

Heightened staff awareness by focusing on procurement of paper, utilities and inter-site travel. Staff themselves put forward many new ideas, eg introducing ‘waste islands’ to encourage staff to segregate waste, and installing energy-saving devices for water and lights in the Dalkeith office.

Exceeded our environmental management targets by using less paper, reducing our business mileage and using our video conferencing facilities more often

One Wednesday in March, 36 staff went tree planting in Bonnywood, near Falkirk, part of the Central Scotland Forest. We planted nearly 1,000 trees — Oak, Alder, Scots Pine, Willow and Silver Birch — that’s an average of around 28 trees per person. The tree planting was funded via some of the savings we have made through environmental awareness activities, such as using less paper through double-sided printing.

What happens next?

- ◆ We will continue to promote environmental awareness and encourage staff to put forward new ideas to minimise SQA’s effect on the environment.

People

Make a Change

Background

- ◆ Make a Change (MAC) is a staff-run programme that encourages us all to live healthily and have fun doing it.

What we did in 2007-08

Were awarded the Scotland's Health at Work Gold Award for both Glasgow and Dalkeith sites. This recognises the organisation's commitment to the health and welfare of all its employees. Highlights of MAC activities this year included free fruit days, a travel and holiday health event, and opportunities to try out exercise activities such as salsa dancing and hula hooping.

Process

E-assessment

Background

- ◆ Our corporate and business plans include a commitment to increasing the use of e-assessment to support our qualifications.
- ◆ The main reasons for increasing our use of e-assessment are to meet growing demand from our customers for e-assessment in recognition of the flexibility it brings, and to improve the quality of the assessment process.

What we did in 2007–08

Refreshed our Strategy and Vision for e-assessment with input from stakeholders. The refreshed version was published on our website in June.

Put in place licensing arrangements to allow us to access software for authoring and delivering e-assessment. This will allow us to create and deliver e-assessment as a normal part of our business where there is evidence of customer demand or where we believe it will enhance learners' experience.

Continued to pilot new approaches. We piloted e-assessment for two subjects as part of the 2007 Diet, piloted the use of e-assessment to support delivery of Skills for Work Courses, and started to explore the potential of social software to support the assessment of group work.

Offered training for our own staff, appointees and centre staff in developing and working with e-assessment, to help encourage its use.

Worked with other regulatory bodies in the UK on the 'Regulatory Principles for e-Assessment' and the 'Guide to Effective Practice in e-Assessment'. Both of these documents are UK-wide, and will help ensure that e-assessment is seen as valid and mainstream.

Process

E-assessment in Diet 2007

Background

- ◆ As a pilot, we offered some candidates the chance to take on-screen external assessments for Higher and Intermediate 2 Biotechnology and Intermediate 1 Physics. We are exploring ways to make the best use of the available technology and increase the opportunities available to candidates.

What we did in 2007–08

Prepared e-assessments for Higher and Intermediate 2 Biotechnology, and Intermediate 1 Physics — an additional subject compared to Diet 2006. There were 123 entries from 10 centres for the Biotechnology assessments, and 70 entries from eight centres for the Physics assessment.

Ran two training sessions for staff in the centres involved, both near the start of the project. We also liaised with the centres involved, and with the commercial company involved in the project, to administer the e-assessments.

Evaluated the project. The experiences of staff in the centres were generally very positive, although some said that scaling up would have to be carefully handled.

What happens next?

- ◆ We will build on the experiences of this project to offer e-assessments in the future.
- ◆ We will develop a more flexible approach to e-assessments based on the feedback received.

Process

E-marking

Background

- ◆ The Donaldson Report (2003) concluded that our post-examination quality control procedures were 'end loaded' and would benefit from moving from a quality control model to one of 'up front' quality assurance. We investigated ways of enhancing quality assurance, including the appropriate use of technology.
- ◆ For the 2006 Diet we successfully piloted electronic capture of marks directly from examination scripts. In 2007 we developed this e-marking pilot further by introducing a pilot of on-screen marking of scanned images.

What we did in 2007-08

Expanded our pilot of electronic marks capture. Seven marking teams used electronic marks entry while still marking from paper.

Introduced a pilot of on-screen marking from scanned image. Two marking teams were marking from scanned image.

Evaluated the pilots. Our evaluation of these pilots informed the development of the future quality assurance model. This included defining criteria to be used to generate benchmark scripts which markers mark to develop a sound understanding of the national standard before starting "live" marking

What happens next?

- ◆ For the 2008 Diet, nine exams will be 'e-marked' by 14 marking teams.
- ◆ This year, the focus will be on proving the benefits of the new, enhanced Quality Assurance model.
- ◆ For our expanded pilot of e-marking from scanned image, benchmark scripts will be included during live marking to allow ongoing monitoring and quality assurance whilst providing additional support to markers.
- ◆ Investigate the potential of the new system for marker specialisation.

Process

E-NABs: Mathematics, Computing and Computing Studies

Background

- ◆ Our e-NABs (electronic National Assessment Bank) for Higher Mathematics, Intermediate 2 Computing and Intermediate 1 Computing Studies provide formative and summative assessments to enhance candidates' learning opportunities.
- ◆ The assessments link to other online resources, in particular the SCHOLAR online materials. The SCHOLAR programme (Heriot Watt University) provides common educational resources and a 'virtual college' support network for all authorities in Scotland.

What we did in 2007-08

Held seven staff training workshops between May and November for staff offering e-NABs. Some of these workshops were jointly presented by ourselves and SCHOLAR teams.

Offered continuous support for staff and candidates in centres. We provided telephone, e-mail and face-to-face support.

Agreed common registration details for the e-NABs and SCHOLAR systems, as far as possible. Users of both systems now only need to remember one username and password to access both systems.

What happens next?

We will build on this work to:

- ◆ Offer e-assessment for a wider range of National Qualifications in line with feedback from customers.

Process

Results Online

Background

- ◆ Candidates can register with us to see their results online. This gives them the choice of when and how they receive their results. We are also offering 'text alerts', where outline results can be sent to a registered mobile phone number, useful if candidates are away on holiday, for instance.
- ◆ Developments in this area are driven by our desire to increase candidates' choices, support lifelong learning and embrace new technology to improve our service. This year's Results Online service builds on pilots from the previous two years.

What we did in 2007-08

Registered around 35,000 candidates for the Results Online service. We piloted the service with candidates for our National Qualifications.

Around 20,000 candidates accessed their online account between 6 and 8 August. We also sent out text alerts to nearly 6,000 candidates.

Had good feedback from the candidates. Although the service was not delivered to an acceptable standard, candidate surveys confirmed the demand for such a service. Independent technical and usability reviews have been completed. In our post-results surveys, 97% rated it likely or very likely that they would want to access their results online again for future exams.

What happens next?

- ◆ For 2008-09 we have further developed this service based on findings from the three years of pilots and from external technical and usability reviews.
- ◆ The updated service is MySQA. This will be an all-year-round online service for all candidates taking any SQA qualifications, giving them the choice of when and how they can access their results. It will mean that candidates can access their SQA qualification records – qualifications they have been entered for, and the results they have achieved. This provides more support for lifelong learning.
- ◆ We will open registration for the service to NQ candidates from May 2008. They will be able to receive their results on the 5 August by email and optional text alert.
- ◆ The service will be promoted to all other candidates in Autumn 2008.

Process

Website improvements

Background

- ◆ Having received feedback from customers, we knew that we needed to improve the search engine on our website.
- ◆ We needed to improve the structure and design of our website to make it more user-friendly. We also needed to update it with refreshed corporate branding.

What we did in 2007–08

Improved the search facility and implemented a new design and refreshed branding. We did this in time for launch at our Customer Conference. The new design includes ‘Services for ...’ links to customised content for customer groups. Another development was the new, open source, search engine, which came online at the end of March.

Received positive feedback on design from customer conference and in general usage. We’ve seen an increase in site visitors this year — numbers are 28.7% up on overall visitors in 2006–07.

Launched our free past papers download service, increasing access to this useful resource. The service has been very popular, with over 250,000 past papers from the 2007 diet of examinations downloaded up to April 2008.

What happens next?

- ◆ We will be reviewing how we organise the information on our website and making further improvements to our search engine in 2008-09.

The future

You've read about what we've done throughout 2007–08, but what about the future?

This page gives a very brief outline of some of our targets and plans for the coming year, and further ahead.

Delivering our qualifications and services

- ◆ Plans are well in hand for this year's certification run in August, and will continue to deliver certification of units and group awards throughout the year.
- ◆ We'll be looking at various ways of making sure that our qualifications offer opportunities for all and provide the skills Scottish employers need, and that they do so in the best possible way.

Policy

- ◆ We'll work with the Scottish Government on the next steps for Curriculum for Excellence.
- ◆ We'll continue to publish ideas and analysis to inform policy development.

Improving our services and processes

- ◆ We'll continue to offer value for money by making our services as simple to use, secure and effective as possible.
- ◆ We'll invest in e-enabled services for our customers, candidates, appointees, and staff, when and where it's appropriate.

Our people

- ◆ We'll make sure that our organisational structure and culture support our corporate values and objectives.
- ◆ We'll continue to improve the way we work with our appointees (the people we rely on to deliver exams and other services).

Increasing uptake and market share

- ◆ We'll learn about marketing and customer management strategies from other leading organisations, and will share our own expertise.

- ◆ We'll seek to increase uptake of our qualifications and look for new markets to get the full benefit of the public investment in their development.